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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to discover and examine the attitudes of private liberal arts college presidents toward accreditation. The motivating factor was evidence of concern among these presidents that institutional accreditation is not meeting the needs of their colleges, and may actually challenge the viability of a college at a critical time in its development. The research concerned itself with the work of the six regional accreditation associations, and addressed four questions: (1) What are the attitudes of the presidents toward the application of regional standards, procedures, and policies as they affect institutional management?; (2) What are the implications of these attitudes for the small colleges' academic development?; (3) What are the implications of these attitudes for the financial maintenance and viability of the small college as an institution?; and (4) What are the implications of these attitudes for the colleges' ability to innovate? A questionnaire was developed and sent to the presidents of the 147 member institutions of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges. The survey results are presented and analyzed, and the questionnaire is included. (Author/MSE)

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INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION AND THE PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

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Background of the Study

Since the turn of the last century, college accreditation has become an increasingly important element in the relation of institutions of higher education to the society in which they exist. Regional accreditation was first established to guarantee standards between secondary schools and institutions of higher education for purposes of regulating the acceptance and matriculation of students from the secondary level to higher levels. Today the power to set standards is exercised by six regional associations. The importance of regional accreditation has also taken on new meaning because United States federal agencies now rely upon regional accreditation to qualify institutions for eligibility in the granting of federal monies. This change has brought increased attention to the role of accrediting associations. During the past decade, an increasing public concern has been voiced with regard to the process, objectives, and outcomes of regional accreditation.

Institutional accreditation, which is conducted on a regional basis, has been criticized for discouraging innovation, employing arbitrary standards, being secretive, excluding proprietary and vocational institutions, and being unresponsive to the public.[1] Orlans[2] has criticized accrediting agencies by charging that they are insufficiently responsive to consumers (secretive) and that they represent a monopoly in regional accreditation that has systematically barred proprietary and other schools from access to federal funds.

Today presidents of private liberal arts colleges seem especially vulnerable to the impact of accreditation. Two reasons are important in this regard. First, federal monies for higher education generally

are granted only to accredited institutions.[3] Second, students are more likely to enroll at accredited colleges and universities.[4]

College administrators have always played a central role in the development and operation of the regional associations. Yet, there is growing evidence of concern among college presidents that institutional accreditation does not meet the needs of institutions and may in fact challenge the viability of a college at a critical time in its development.

To the extent that regional accreditation associations encourage or limit the small college's ability to remain viable academically and financially, they exert a prominent influence on the existence of these colleges.

These problems suggested a need to discover and examine the attitudes of private liberal arts college presidents relative to institutional accreditation. Consideration of the findings of this study will provide college presidents with information to utilize more effectively the accrediting process. These data will also serve as a resource to regional accreditation officials whose responsibility it is to communicate effectively information regarding the standards, benefits and potential uses of accreditation. Therefore, the study examined how college presidents perceived the effect of institutional accreditation standards and procedures with regard to institutional management.

The research concerned itself with the work of the six regional associations whose responsibility it is to accredit institutions. The six regional accrediting commissions are coordinated by the Council on Post Secondary Accreditation (COPA).[5] These six associations are:
(1) Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (MSA);
(2) New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NEA);

(3) North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA); (4) Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools (NWA); (5) Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary and higher Schools (SAC); (6) Western College Association (WCA).[6]

Design of the Study

The specific purpose of this research was to explore the following questions.

> What are the attitudes of private liberal arts college presidents with regard to the application of regional accreditation standards, procedures and policies as they affect institutional management?

In addition, the following spe-ific questions were asked:

> 1. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation for the academic development of the small college?
>
> 2. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation for the financial maintenance and viability of the small college as institution?
>
> 3. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation as they effect the college's ability to innovate?

The central question of this study was developed to include topics of relevance to both the chief college administrator in his role as leader and manager and to the regional associations whose role it is to administer the standards, policies and procedures under which colleges must operate in order to obtain or retain membership.

Three constructs, academic development, financial maintenance and ability to innovate, were selected as central to the management and operational functions of the college president. A questionnaire was designed which focused upon these three constructs while allowing for two additional sections, one concerning institutional data and a second providing space for subjective written response.

Five private college presidents whose institutions were not members of The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges were asked to respond to a questionnaire and to a series of six questions concerning the instrument's format, content, and appropriateness. Their responses and the subsequent redrafting of the questionnaire formed the validity portion of the study. The questionnaire was then administered to a group of 20 private college presidents from Minnesota and Wisconsin. Their responses were tabulated using the Crostab 2 program of the Statjob series developed at the University of Wisconsin.[7] The responses and tabulated results indicated that the questionnaire was soliciting responses as anticipated and thus formed the reliability portion of the study.

Along with appropriate cover materials, the questionnaire was forwarded to the presidents of the 147 member institutions of CASC.

The presidents of CASC colleges were asked to respond to the questionnaire comprised of items which described the academic, financial and innovative activities of their colleges. The CASC organization was chosen for this study because its member institutions represent a group of American colleges who maintain relatively similar enrollment patterns, liberal arts academic missions, similar size, like financial conditions, and who are in a position, by virtue of these similarities in size, academic mission, and financial condition, to be strongly aware of the impact of accreditation. The instrument, constructed to supply data relative to the questions established in this study, consisted of five parts, including institutional data, academic data, financial data, data concerning innovative actvity, and a section for subjective written responses (Appendix). The CASC presidents' responses, presented in frequency and percentage counts for each item, as well as cross-tabulation between

institutional and attitudinal items, represent the basic data of the study. The data were organized so as to present the findings for those variables which were perceived by college presidents as being affected positively by accreditation, those which were affected negatively, and those which were not affected by accreditation. Identification of those variables which have a Positive Effect, Negative Effect, or No Effect allowed the researcher to identify the implications of presidential attitudes for each of the three specific questions of the study. The major question of this study is answerable in light of the data concerning specific questions 1, 2, and 3, each of which deals with one major aspect of the college management and operation and the data relative to presidential leadership and decision making in both its objective and subjective presentations. The data were not solicited and have not been presented so as to establish causal relationships between variables.

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

One hundred and seven presidents from member institutions of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges returned completed questionnaires. These returns represented seventy-three percent of the population surveyed.

Of the responding colleges, 71.03 percent were co-educational liberal arts colleges. The remaining colleges represented religious and technical identities. The majority of colleges, 83.17 percent, maintained an enrollment of under 1000 students. Fifty-one percent were affiliated with the North Central Accreditation Association, while twenty-two percent were affiliated with the Southern Association. The remaining colleges were divided among the Middle States, New England,

North West and Southern Associations. Fifty-eight percent of the colleges offer twenty or fewer major degree programs while twenty-nine percent offer twenty-one or more major programs.

The majority of presidents responding to this survey have held that office for more than three years, but fewer than ten years. Seventy-five percent of the presidents had held administrative positions at either their current institution or another institution prior to assuming the presidency. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents had been presidents of their current institutions during the last accreditation evaluations; however, seventy-five percent of the presidents had never served as visiting team members at other institutions. A large majority of the respondents, 90.28 percent, indicated satisfaction with the composition and preparation of their institution's last regional association visiting team.

Over fifty percent of the survey respondents indicated that accreditation had a Positive Effect on the academic development of their institution for seven of the twenty-nine variables listed under this category. (Table I) For nineteen variables in the academic development section, over fifty percent of the presidents indicated that accreditation has No Effect. The remaining ten variables in this section were divided equally between Positive Effect and No Effect responses. Less than three percent of the responses indicated Negative Effect for any variable in this section.

TABLE I

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
1. Number of Majors Offered	47	2	55	2	106	N
	44.34	1.89	51.89	1.89	100.00	%
2. Faculty Student Ratio	41	2	56	4	103	N
	39.89	1.94	54.37	3.88	100.00	%
3. Percent of Ph.D.'s Among Faculty	82	0	22	1	105	N
	78.10	0	20.95	.95	100.00	%
4. Number of Professional Majors Offered	34	0	61	10	105	N
	32.38	0	58.10	9.52	100.0	%
5. Number of Library Volumes	85	1	19	1	106	N
	80.19	.94	17.02	.94	100.00	%
6. Rate of Library Acquisition	77	2	24	3	106	N
	72.64	1.89	22.64	2.83	100.00	%
7. Academic Computer Availability	16	0	75	14	105	N
	15.24	0	71.43	13.33	100.00	%
8. Number of Your Graduates Entering Post Graduate Institutions	51	1	45	9	106	N
	48.11	.94	42.45	8.49	100.00	%
9. Faculty Tenure Policy	42	3	55	6	106	N
	39.62	2.83	51.89	5.66	100.00	%
10. Admission Requirements	49	1	53	3	106	N
	46.23	.94	50.00	2.83	100.00	%
11. Graduation Requirements	55	0	49	2	106	N
	51.89	0	46.23	1.89	100.00	%
12. Institutional Future Planning	85	0	18	2	105	N
	80.95	0	17.14	1.90	100.0	%

TABLE I (Continued)

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
13. Faculty Evaluation By Students	50	1	47	8	106	N
	47.17	.94	44.34	7.55	100.00	%
14. Faculty Evaluation By Administration	42	0	53	9	104	N
	40.38	0	50.96	8.65	100.00	%
15. Faculty Evaluation By Their Peers	43	0	53	10	106	N
	40.57	0	50.00	9.43	100.00	%
16. Distribution of Library Holdings Across Disciplinary Lines	61	0	36	9	106	N
	57.55	0	33.96	8.49	100.00	%
17. General Education Requirements	57	0	45	3	105	N
	54.29	0	42.86	2.86	100.00	%
18. Faculty Teaching Load	60	4	39	3	106	N
	56.00	3.77	36.79	2.83	100.00	%
19. Academic Advising Program	45	0	59	2	106	N
	42.45	0	55.66	1.89	100.00	%
20. Faculty Research	22	1	77	6	106	N
	20.75	.94	72.64	5.66	100.00	%
21. Equal Employment Opportunity	11	0	81	14	106	N
	10.38	0	76.42	13.21	100.00	%
22. Affirmative Action	13	1	78	14	106	N
	12.26	.94	73.50	13.21	100.00	%
23. Length of Class Period	24	1	78	3	106	N
	22.64	.94	73.58	2.83	100.00	%

TABLE I (Continued)

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
24. Faculty Contact Hours Per Credit	39	3	61	2	105	N
	37.14	2.86	58.10	1.90	100.00	%
25. Institutional Grading Policy	34	0	67	3	104	N
	32.69	0	64.42	2.98	100.00	%
26. Student Record Keeping Policy	50	1	53	1	105	N
	47.62	.95	50.48	.95	100.00	%
27. Length of Term	32	1	69	3	105	N
	30.48	.95	65.71	2.86	100.00	%
28. Formality of Faculty Student Relationships	15	2	80	8	105	N
	14.29	1.90	76.19	7.62	100.00	%
29. Academic Residency Requirements	20	2	73	11	106	N
	19.87	1.89	68.87	10.38	100.00	%

Eight variables in the financial maintenance section of the questionnaire received more than fifty percent Positive Effect responses. (Table II) Twelve of the twenty-six variables received over fifty percent No Effect responses while the six remaining variables were evenly divided between Positive Effect and No Effect responses. Less than three percent of the responses indicated Negative Effect for any of the variables in the financial maintenance section.

TABLE II

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON FINANCIAL MAINTENANCE AND VIABILITY

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
32. Faculty Salary Level	57	2	46		105	N
	54.29	1.90	43.81		100.00	%
33. Support for Library Acquisitions	77	3	24	1	105	N
	73.33	2.86	22.86	.95	100.00	%
34. Balanced Budget	61	1	40	3	105	N
	58.10	.95	33.10	2.86	100.00	%
35. Endowment Administration	28	1	72	3	104	N
	26.92	.96	69.23	2.98	100.00	%
36. Extent of Indebtedness	32	2	67	4	105	N
	30.48	1.90	63.81	3.81	100.00	%
37. Tuition Rate	21	0	81	3	105	N
	20.00	0	77.14	2.86	100.00	$
38. Faculty Travel Expense	33	3	66	3	105	N
	31.43	2.86	62.86	2.86	100.00	%
39. Credit Rating	34	0	61	10	105	N
	32.38	0	58.10	9.52	100.00	%
40. Alumni Support (Financial)	47	0	50	7	104	N
	45.19	0	48.08	6.73	100.00	%
41. Instructional Materials Budget	55	1	47	1	104	N
	52.88	.96	45.19	.96	100.00	%
42. Support for Faculty Research	27	1	73	3	104	N
	25.96	.96	70.19	2.88	100.00	%
43. Support for Scholarships and Fellowships	44	1	57	3	105	N
	41.90	.95	54.29	2.86	100.00	%

TABLE II (Continued)

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON FINANCIAL MAINTENANCE AND VIABILITY

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
44. Acquisition of Laboratory Equipment	63	1	38	3	105	N
	60.00	.95	36.19	2.86	100.00	%
45. Support for New Programs (from institutional budget)	39	1	58	7	105	N
	37.14	.95	55.24	6.67	100.00	%
46. Support for New Programs (from outside the institution)	49	1	46	9	105	N
47. Adequacy of Available Resources	48	2	46	9	105	N
	45.71	1.90	43.81	8.57	100.00	%
48. Budgeted Income Distribution (by department or division)	42	2	56	5	105	N
	40.00	1.90	53.33	4.76	100.00	%
49. Faculty Salary Negotiation	18	1	78	7	104	N
	17.31	.96	75.00	6.73	100.00	%
50. Faculty Collective-Bargaining	4	0	88	12	104	N
	3.85	0	84.62	11.54	100.00	%
51. Staff Collective Bargaining	3	0	90	11	104	N
	2.88	0	86.54	10.58	100.00	%
52. Eligibility for Federal Funds	78	0	24	3	105	N
	74.29	0	22.86	2.86	100.00	%
53. Level of Federal Support Obtained	50	0	42	12	104	N
	48.08	0	40.38	11.54	100.00	%

TABLE II (Continued)

ATTITUDES OF RESPONDING CASC PRESIDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF ACCREDITATION ON FINANCIAL MAINTENACE AND VIABILITY

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
54. Eligibility for State Funds	66	0	35	3	104	N
	63.46	0	33.65	2.88	100.00	%
55. Level of State Support Obtained	44	0	52	9	105	N
	41.90	0	49.52	8.57	100.00	%
56. Eligibility for Private Funds	84	0	19	2	105	N
	80.00	0	18.10	1.90	100.00	%
57. Level of Private Funding Obtained	60	0	36	8	104	N
	57.69	0	34.62	7.69	100.00	%

Eight variables in the ability to innovate section of the questionnaire received fifty percent or higher Positive Effect responses. (Table III) Four variables received fifty percent or higher No Effect responses and two variables were divided evenly between Positive Effect and No Effect. Two variables received greater than ten percent Negative Effect responses in this section.

TABLE III

PRESIDENTIAL ATTITUDES REGARDING ABILITY TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN INNOVATION RELATIVE TO REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
60. Development of New Degree Programs	58	9	30	6	103	N
	56.33	8.74	29.13	5.83	100.00	%
61. Institutional Commitment to New Course Preparation	55	2	39	8	104	N
	52.88	1.92	37.50	7.69	100.00	%
62. Student Participation in the Planning of Curriculum	52	1	45	6	104	N
	50.00	.96	43.27	5.77	100.00	%
63. Institutional Philosophy	58	0	43	2	103	N
	56.31	0	41.75	1.94	100.00	%
64. Consistency Between Institutional Goals and Institutional Philosophy	67	0	33	3	103	N
	65.00	0	32.04	2.91	100.00	%
65. Changes in Degree Requirements	37	1	59	7	104	N
	35.58	.96	56.73	6.73	100.00	%
66. Open Admissions Policy	10	2	78	15	105	N
	9.52	1.90	74.29	14.92	100.00	%
67. Academic Residency Requirements	26	0	69	10	105	N
	24.76	0	65.71	9.52	100.00	%
68. Transfer of Credit	71	2	29	2	104	N
	68.27	1.92	27.88	1.92	100.00	%
69. Contractual Arrangements with Non-accredited Institutions	27	12	46	18	103	N
	26.21	11.65	44.66	17.48	100.00	%
70. Comprehensiveness of New Program Evaluations	55	1	41	8	105	N
	52.38	.95	39.05	7.62	100.00	%

TABLE III (Continued)

PRESIDENTIAL ATTITUDES REGARDING ABILITY TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN INNOVATION RELATIVE TO REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
71. Abandonment of Traditional Criteria for Assuring Quality	26	5	49	18	104	N
	25.00	10.58	47.12	17.31	100.00	%
72. Uniqueness of Academic Programs	41	5	52	6	104	N
	39.42	4.81	50.00	5.77	100.00	%
73. Ability to Innovate	55	7	40	3	105	N
	52.38	6.67	38.10	2.86	100.00	%

A majority of presidents feel that accreditation had a Positive Effect on their ability to provide leadership and make decisions relative to academic development and financial maintenance. (Table IV)

TABLE IV

CASC PRESIDENTS RESPONSES CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF REGIONAL ACCREDITATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIAL MAINTENACE

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON"T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
30. Your Leadership Relative to Academic Policy Changes	60	1	41	3	105	N
	57.17	.95	39.05	2.86	100.00	%

TABLE IV (Continued)

CASC PRESIDENTS RESPONSES CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF REGIONAL ACCREDITATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIAL MAINTENACE

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
31. Your Decisions Relative to Academic Policy	63	3	33	5	104	N
	60.58	2.88	31.73	4.81	100.00	%
58. Your Leadership Relative to Financial Policy Changes	49	3	47	6	105	N
	46.67	2.86	44.76	5.71	100.00	%
59. Your Decisions Relative to Financial Policy	55	3	43	4	105	N
	52.38	2.86	40.95	3.81	100.00	%

Written responses to questions concerning the effects of accreditation strongly support the positive attitudes expressed in response to those variables concerning leadership, decision making and the overall effect of accreditation. Over ninety percent of the total population indicated that accreditation has had an overall Positive Effect on their institution.

Data obtained from the cross-tabulation of institutional data with attitudinal data, and presidential data with attitudinal data is consistent with the attitudes expressed in single variable tabulations. Only one significant difference could be found between the responses of presidents from the various categories of institutional size and

type. A chi-square test for significance applied to the data concerning academic decision making yielded a value of 4.60. This value marked a significant difference at the .05 level between the response of coeducational liberal arts college presidents and non-coeducational or liberal arts college presidents. In all other cross-tabulations, the institutions remained positive in their responses regarding the effects of accreditation on academic leadership and decision making and financial leadership and decision making.

Cross-tabulation of leadership and decision making variables with regional association affiliation yielded less unanimous indication of Positive Effect. A chi-square test for significance yielded no significant difference at the .05 level between institutions from the six regions. Regarding academic leadership and academic decision making, colleges affiliated with the Middle States and North West regions indicated No Effect while all others indicated Positive Effect for accreditation. The variables financial leadership and decision making yielded No Effect responses from a majority of presidents in the Middle States and New England regions. The Western Association colleges were evenly divided between Positive Effect and No Effect, while presidents from the three remaining regional associations were positive regarding the effects of accreditation on their financial leadership and decision making.

Cross-tabulations of data from institutions maintaining twenty or fewer major degree programs and institutions maintaining twenty-one or more major degree programs again yielded results which indicate that accreditation has either a Positive Effect or No Effect on the variables tabulated. Presidents from institutions with fewer than twenty major

programs and those with more than twenty-one major programs indicated that accreditation has had a Positive Effect on institutional future planning. For two variables, effect on number of majors offered and effect on number of professional majors offered, the majority response from both groups was No Effect. Both groups of responding institutions indicated a positive response regarding the effect of accreditation on the development of new degree programs. Institutions with twenty-one or more major programs were positive regarding the effects of accreditation on their institutions' commitment to new course preparation. However, institutions with fewer than twenty-one major programs slightly favored the attitude that accreditation had No Effect on new course preparation. A chi-square test for significance administered to these data yielded a significant difference at the .05 level between institutions with twenty or fewer majors and those with twenty-one or more majors for the variable institutional commitment to new course preparation.

Presidents who had served in that capacity for two years or less and presidents who had served for three years or more felt that accreditation had had a Postive Effect on their academic leadership and decision making, and their financial decision making. However, both groups were equally divided between a response of Positive Effect and No Effect regarding the variable financial leadership.

Respondents who had served in positions as faculty of the same or another institution, or as an administrator of the same or another institution, overwhelmingly affirmed that accreditation had a Positive Effect on their current institutions. Presidents who held that position during their institutions' previous regional evaluation, as well as those

who had not held the position at the time of most recent evaluation, responded that accreditation had an overall Positive Effect on their institutions. A similar positive response was obtained from both presidents who had previously served as site-visit team members at other institutions and those who had not.

While the group of presidents surveyed in this research were divided concerning the effects of variables listed as characteristics of academic development, financial maintenance and ability to innovate, they indicated that the effects of accreditation were either positive, or that accreditation had No Effect on a specific variable. Not a single variable received a significant response of Negative Effect. The presidents overwhelmingly affirmed that regional accreditation has had an overall Positive Effect on their institutions. (Table V)

TABLE V

OVERALL EFFECT OF ACCREDITATION ON RESPONDING CASC INSTITUTIONS

VARIABLE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	NO EFFECT	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONSES	
In Your Opinion, What Has Been the Overall Effect of Regional Accreditation on Your Institution?	97	1	4	2	104	N
	93.27	.96	3.85	1.92	100.00	%

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Conclusions:

1. CASC presidents maintain an attitude that is overwhelmingly positive regarding the overall effects of accreditation on their institutions.

2. Presidential leadership and decision making are affected positively by the standards, procedures and policies of regional accreditation.

3. Many standards identified as variables in this research, and traditionally associated with regional accreditation policies, are perceived by presidents as having No Effect on their institutions or their leadership and decision making.

4. None of the accreditation standards, policies and procedures assessed in this research were perceived by significant numbers of presidents as having a Negative Effect on their institutions or their leadership and decision making.

5. Accreditation is perceived as having a Positive Effect on the acquisition of private, state and federal funding.

6. Accreditation is perceived as having a generally Positive Effect on academic development, specifically with regard to academic planning.

7. CASC presidents do not view accreditation as a threat to innovation or their leadership and decision making relative to innovation.

Conclusion number three should be understood as pertaining to the seventy-four additudinal variables which made up the objective portion of the questionnaire and which were drawn from several sources, particularly

the program and standard guides of the six regional associations. These questionnaire items were developed to reflect specific regional standards where identifiable. While the data suggest that a large number of these standards retain their significance relative to institutional accreditation, an almost equal number of standards were perceived by presidents as having No Effect on their institutions.

Implications:

In addition to the central question of this study, three specific questions were asked. Each of these questions dealt with one topic of central importance to the management of private colleges, including academic development, financial viability and the effects of accreditation on innovation. The questions were stated so as to identify the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation for each of the topics in question.

Specific Question 1. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation for the academic development of the small college?

A. The use of planning and development strategies has been an historically important part of the accreditation process. This emphasis on planning will continue to be of significant importance, particularly as colleges modify their courses of study by developing innovative programs.

B. The literature reviewed for this study provides evidence that regional accreditation has been less than consistent, and less than thorough in its representation of accredited institutions to the public. With the proliferation of post secondary education institutions, it becomes increasingly important that colleges clearly and responsibly

represent themselves to the public. Regional associations can play a critical role in this process by facilitating the thorough self-evaluation required in the accreditation process.

C. Regional accreditation will continue for the forseeable future to represent academic quality among member institutions. Regional accreditation must continue to be dealt with by the administrators of private liberal arts colleges if they hope to maintain their institutions' viability and competitiveness during the coming decade. It is unlikely that an entirely new standard or universal accreditation agency will emerge in the forseeable future, although the formation of The Council on Post Secondary Accreditation (COPA) may be seen as a step in that direction. The six regional associations will continue to perform their roles as regional evaluators and accreditors.

D. Site-visit teams will continue to play an important role in the evaluation and ultimate accreditation of institutions. The literature on accreditation provides some evidence that the regional associations are paying greater attention to the preparation and selection of site-visit team members. This is, however, no guarantee that members selected by the regional association will understand the role, objectives and inherent problems of the small college. (See Recommendations, page 23)

Specific Question 2. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation for the financial maintenance and viability of the small college as an institution?

A. The role of accreditation as a qualifier for federal, state and some private funding will be strengthened in the future. There are indications that the federal government's insistence upon regional

accreditation for access to federal monies has been workable and will continue to be used as a qualifying condition.

B. Financial planning and development can be enhanced and strengthened by the accreditation process. This is especially true during the initial accreditation self study, during which colleges are called upon to identify their financial condition and planning not only for the given moment but for the future as well. All six regional associations continue to require financial solvency, appropriate budgetary policies and a realistic plan for the financial future of the college.

C. Regional association expectations relative to the current solvency and future financial plans of an institution can aid the president in calling for sound financial planning and expenditure from his institution.

Specific Question 3. What are the implications of presidential attitudes regarding accreditation as they affect the college's ability to innovate?

A. Each of the six regional associations has provided evidence that it is willing to consider the accreditation of innovative and alternative programs and institutions. The literature on accreditation identifies the perception that accreditation stifles innovation. The implication, drawn from the conclusions of this study, would indicate that college presidents increasingly share a positive attitude regarding innovation and the effects that accreditation has on innovation within their institutions. The development of innovative and alternative programs would, therefore, appear to be consistent with the future development of colleges and their involvement in the accreditation process.

B. The regional associations view planning as a critical process in the development of colleges. Just as planning has been identified as being important to the financial viability of an institution, so too is planning important to the development and implementation of innovative programs.

C. While the six regional associations have indicated a willingness to consider the accreditation of innovative and alternative programs, they have also specified the need for the careful evaluation of such programs. An additional concern may be identified as the need to integrate new programs into existing modes and facilities for study. Colleges which neglect these considerations may find less success than hoped for in the operation of new programs.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations are directed to the six regional accreditation associations, the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges and those persons who currently are, or will someday be, administrators of private liberal arts colleges. The recommendations were developed from the research data presented in this study, from a study of the literature relative to regional accreditation (Bibliography), from the subjective responses of CASC presidents participating in the research and from the researcher's own observations.

Recommendations for Regional Associations

1. The literature reviewed for this study suggests that smaller private colleges do have special needs derived from unique goals and objectives, specialized programs, availability of financial resources, declining enrollments and policies of sponsoring institutions. These

special needs should be recognized by regional associations through the conscientious selecting and preparing of site-visit teams who are cognizant of and sympathetic to the unique role which private colleges play in American higher education.

2. It is recommended that the regional associations continue to define their individual policies regarding innovation. It would be an additional service to the public were these policies to be coordinated from region to region. Steps have been taken in this direction through the use of the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) policy on the accreditation of alternative programs. It is yet unknown whether the COPA organization which has now merged FRACHE and the National Commission on Accreditation (NCA) will adopt a similar policy.

3. It is certain that many administrators, but many more faculty personnel, continue to equate accreditation with the rigid application of clearly defined standards, i.e., percentage of Ph.D.'s among the faculty. The regional associations must work to dispel the myth of the invincible standard, as well as to promote the idea of quality based upon the achievement of the institutions's own clearly defined goals and objectives.

4. At present, only one regional association maintains a research staff. Each association must pay closer attention to research, especially those functions concerned directly with the problems and status of private colleges. This researcher can attest to the paucity of formal research concerning accreditation. Surely this enterprise, so important and costly to private institutions, deserves the benefit of information gained through organized scientific study.

5. It is recommended that the regional associations work to foster an atmosphere of support while working to disestablish the idea of accreditation as an inquisition. While the presidents responding to this study were nearly unanimous in identifying the positive overall effect of accreditation on their institutions, many indicated subjectively that the process of accreditation itself had little or no effect, and in some cases a negative effect, on their institutions.

6. It is recommended that the regional associations develop a higher visibility in representing their member institutions before the public. It is hoped that greater identification of accreditation's role by the general public might facilitate more uniform application of standards from region to region, as well as a more uniform dispersal of the benefits of accreditation.

Recommendations for the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges

1. It is recommended that CASC continue to promote and sponsor research relative to the needs of small private colleges, especially at the interface of institutional accreditation and institutional problems such as finance, admissions and new programs.

2. It is recommended that CASC continue its policy of strong support for the gaining and maintaining of full institutional accreditation among its member colleges. Accreditation will continue to be of critical importance in attracting students and public and private monies in the coming decade. Only through full accreditation can small private colleges share fully in the development of higher education.

3. It is recommended that CASC, through its publications, visitations and workshops, help to identify for the regional associations and member institutions those factors which have played a significant role in accreditation historically, but which offer less significance today owing to the changing needs and economic conditions of the society.

4. It is recommended that CASC work to increase its members' awareness of the benefits of accreditation in areas other than finance. The areas needing greater identification include: planning, coordination of programs within and between institutions, and evaluation of programs and policies.

Recommendations to Administrators

1. It is recommended that private college administrators work to increase the awareness of faculty members concerning the benefits of accreditation so as to better utilize the accreditation process in the development of the institution.

2. It is recommended that private college administrators speak directly to their regional associations regarding those facets of accreditation which have no effect upon the institution and which may represent misuse of time and talent in preparing for accreditation.

3. It is recommended that the administrators of private colleges increase their participation in the work of the associations, especially with regard to visiting team membership and policy making.

4. It is recommended that private college administrators use the self study format, provided by the regional associations, to enhance academic development at their institutions by involving greater numbers of faculty in institutional study and assessment. Little may be gained

by the use of administrator prepared institutional self studies as leverage in forcing change to occur.

5. It is recommended that private college administrators recognize the critical nature of institutional accreditation relative to obtaining funding support, and that they fully utilize the access provided by full accreditation.

The findings of this study identify regional accreditation as an accepted force in the development of higher education. Specifically, it can be said that accreditation will continue to provide qualification status for colleges seeking federal, state and some private funding. In this sense, accreditation is a distinct and readily identifiable force. Less identifiable is accreditation's role as a public service; yet few administrators failed to indicate that accreditation had a Positive Effect on planning and development within their institutions.

The regional associations have a continuing role to play in the development of higher education in the U.S., but that role is subject to change and it appears that change is very much needed. Confusion exists concerning the application of standards and the appropriateness of many standards. While planning for both academic and financial development remain important aspects of the accreditation process, many historically significant standards such as the number of library volumes and percent of Ph.D.'s among the faculty may be waning as criteria for accreditation. Institutions continue to be leary of innovation and the development of alternative programs in light of accreditation standards. The regional associations have responded during the past five years to the need for new standards and new attitudes regarding innovation. Yet,

this response is less than universally understood and will require additional work in the development of self study criteria and the dissemination of attending attitudes that encourage change and innovation.

Smaller colleges face an extremely difficult period during the next ten to fifteen years as enrollments decline, costs increase and the economy continues its slump. Accreditation will help in facilitating the survival of the majority of these institutions. The influence and impact of the accreditation process on current private college administrators attests to this likelihood. Private college presidents are not anamored of the entire accreditation process. But they see in it a force of considerable positive impact. Regional accreditation will play an influential role in the future of private higher education, providing a continuing effort is made to adjust standards and criteria, develop alternative evaluation techniques, unify and coordinate regional activities, better train and equip site-visit personnel, and attend, through research, to the growing number of questions surrounding private higher education and accreditation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Phillip W. Semas, "Accrediting Groups are Accused of Stifling Innovation by Colleges". THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (January 15, 1973), 1-2.

[2]Harold Orlans, PRIVATE ACCREDITATION AND PUBLIC ELIGIBILITY (Lexington, Mass., Lexington Books, D. C. Heath Co., 1975).

[3]Frank G. Dickey and Jerry W. Miller, "Growing Federal Involvement in Nongovernmental Accreditation: Where Should the Line be Drawn?" (Prepared for discussion purposes for a meeting of accrediting agencies recognized by the National Commission on Accrediting, January 3, 1972), p. 1.

[4]William K. Selden, "Accrediting--What is It?" AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS, National Commission on Accrediting, p. 630.

[5]National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, Circular Letter No. 13 (Sept. 3, 1974).

[6]Selden, op. cit., p. 631.

[7]Crostab 2, The University of Wisconsin-Madison Academic Computing Center User Manual for the 1108, First Revision (Madison, 1971).

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APPENDIX

ACCREDITATION AND THE PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

This questionnaire will be held in strict confidence with respect to the responses of individual presidents and specific institutional data. Please respond to each question as indicated.

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

1. Type of institution of which you are president? (please check)

   a. __Liberal Arts, or __Other (Specify):_____

   b. __Coeducational, or __Male Only __Female Only

2. Full time enrollment _____# Part time enrollment _____#

3. In what region is your institution located? (please check one)

   __Middle States Association __Northwest Association
   __New England Association __Southern Association
   __North Central Association __Western College Association

4. Please give exact status if not fully accredited. (please check or specify)

   __Fully accredited: Year accredited_____ Year of last revisit_____

   __Correspondence __Candidate __Other (Specify):_____

5. Number of majors or fields of concentration _____#

   Has this number increased __. or decreased __ since accreditation.

6. Number of years you have served as president of this institution? ____#

7. Previous position? (please check or specify)

   __Faculty of same institution __Administration of same institution
   __Faculty of other institution __Administration of other institution
   __Other (Specify):_____

8. Were you president at your institution's last accreditation evaluation or re-evaluation?

   _____YES _____NO

8. (continued)

If YES, did you find the visiting team to be adequately comprised and appropriately prepared for the visitation?

____YES ____NO

9. Have you participated in regional accrediting evaluations as a visiting team member?

____YES ____NO

10. In what field is your highest earned degree?_____

Have you ever had graduate course work in the field of Higher Education or Educational Administration?

____YES ____NO

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL ACCREDITATION

Please respond to each question by marking an "X" in the box which most closely represents your opinion. The term "Regional Accreditation", as used in the following questions, refers to the policies, procedures and practices of the six regional accreditation agencies.

QUESTION With respect to your ability to manage the academic development of your institution, what effect does regional accreditation have on:	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
1. Number of majors offered?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
2. Faculty student ratio?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
3. Percent of Ph.D.'s among faculty?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
4. Number of professional majors offered?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
5. Number of library volumes?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
6. Rate of library acquisition?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
7. Academic computer availability?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
8. Number of your graduates entering post graduate institutions?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/

		Positive Effect	Negative Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
9.	Faculty tenure policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
10.	Admission requirements?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
11.	Graduation requirements?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
12.	Institutional future planning?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
13.	Faculty evaluation by students?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
14.	Faculty evaluation by administration?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
15.	Faculty evaluation by their peers?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
16.	Distribution of library holdings across disciplinary lines?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
17.	General education requirements?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
18.	Faculty teaching load?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
19.	Academic advising program?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
20.	Faculty research?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
21.	Equal Employment Opportunity?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
22.	Affirmative Action?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
23.	Length of cloass period?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
24.	Faculty contact hours per credit?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
25.	Institutional grading policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
26.	Student record keeping policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
27.	Length of term?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
28.	Formality of faculty student relationships?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
29.	Academic residency requirements?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
30.	Your leadership relative to academic policy changes?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
31.	Your decisions relative to academic policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/

To what extent has the regional accreditation process limited or facilitated your ability to make decisions appropriate to the academic well being of your institution? (Please respond with a written statement.)

FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND ACCREDITATION

QUESTION

With respect to your responsibility for the financial viability of your institution, what effect does regional accreditation have on:

	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
32. Faculty salary level?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
33. Support for library acquisitions?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
34. Balanced Budget?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
35. Endowment administration?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
36. Extent of indebtedness?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
37. Tuition rate?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
38. Faculty travel expense?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
39. Credit rating?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
40. Alumni support? (Financial)	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
41. Instructional materials budget?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
42. Support for faculty research	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
43. Support for scholarships and fellowships	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
44. Acquisition of laboratory equipment	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/

	Positive Effect	Negative Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
45. Support for new programs? (From institutional budget)	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
46. Support for new programs? (From outside the institution)	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
47. Adequacy of available resources?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
48. Budgeted income distribution? (By department or division)	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
49. Faculty salary negotiation?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
50. Faculty collective bargaining?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
51. Staff collective bargaining?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
52. Eligibility for federal funds?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
53. Level of federal support obtained?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
54. Eligibility for state funds?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
55. Level of state support obtained?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
56. Eligibility for private funds?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
57. Level of private funding obtained?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
58. Your leadership relative to financial policy changes?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
59. Your decisions relative to financial policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/

To what extent has the regional accreditation process <u>limited</u> or <u>facilitated</u> your ability to make decisions appropriate to the financial maintenance of your institution? (Please respond with a written statement.)

INNOVATION AND ACCREDITATION

QUESTION

With respect to your ability to provide leadership relative to innovation within your institution, what effect does regional accreditation have on:

		Positive Effect	Negative Effect	No Effect	Don't Know
60.	Development of new degree programs?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
61.	Institutional commitment to new course preparation?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
62.	Student participation in planning of curriculum?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
63.	Institutional philosophy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
64.	Consistency between institutional goals and institutional philosophy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
65.	Changes in degree requirements?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
66.	Open admissions policy?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
67.	Academic residency requirement?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
68.	Transfer of credit?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
69.	Contractual arrangements with non-accredited institutions?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
70.	Comprehensiveness of new program evaluations?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
71.	Abandonment of traditional criteria for assuring quality?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
72.	Uniqueness of academic programs?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
73.	Ability to innovate?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/
74.	In your opinion, what has been the overall effect of regional accreditation on your institution?	/__/	/__/	/__/	/__/

Please respond to the two remaining questions with a written statement. Documents or data supporting your response would be greatly appreciated and may be forwarded with the questionnaire.

A. To what extent has the regional accreditation process limited or facilitated your institution's ability to be unique, viable, competitive?

B. To what extent do you feel personally constrained or aided by regional accreditation policies when calling for greater innovative activity at your own institution?